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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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QUESTION BOX:

Warm up cold washing machine?
Cold weather vacation for refrigerator?
How use glass cooking utensils?

ANSWERS FROM: Home electrification specialists and home equipment specialists, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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Today we have two questions on electric household equipment, and one on the glass cooking ware which seems to be replacing prewar saucepans and baking pans of metal and enamelware. Let's begin with a question on the care of an electric washing machine, answered by the home electrification specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. This homemaker writes:

"I keep my electric washer in an unheated room, and sometimes it gets pretty cold there during the winter. Wouldn't it be a good idea to move it into a heated room before I use it to let the machine warm up?"

Yes, the home electrification specialists say, that's a good common-sense way of making the machine last longer.

A cold washing machine is like a cold car. The oil and grease around the gears and on the bearings get stiff. That makes gears and other moving parts turn hard, so your motor has to start an extra heavy load. Such an overload causes more electricity to flow through the motor than it is designed to carry, and may shorten its life.

Another thing to remember is that cold oil and grease are too stiff to spread out easily and cover bearing surfaces with the thin film of oil which prevents wear. As a result, a cold washer may run for several minutes with nearly dry bearings before oil and grease warm up enough to start working efficiently.

Of course if your washer has a porcelain lined tub, that's another reason for warming your machine before you use it. Very hot water on cold porcelain may cause the lining to crack and chip. If your washer has a metal tub, however, you may sometimes warm the machine by filling the tub with hot water 15 minutes or half an hour before washing time.

Now for a question about the electric refrigerator. "Now that cold weather's here, could I conserve electricity by getting along without my refrigerator?"

No, the home electrification specialists say. Giving your refrigerator a winter vacation seldom pays, even to conserve electric power in wartime.

For one thing, household refrigerators use relatively little current— from 25 to 50 kilowatt hours a month—used steadily through the day and night. In many cases the gain from saving power will be more than offset by the increase in food spoilage and waste.

Scientists have found that on the average only about 19 days---scattered here and there throughout the year---are just right for natural refrigeration in most parts of the coutry. Some winter days may be too warm. Others may be so cold that food kept in the usual places will freeze. So, wherever you store your butter, milk, leftovers and other perishables, if you depend on the weather, you're apt to have considerable food waste.

Equally important, if your refrigerator is of the open unit type, you may find that the valves stick when you go to turn it on again after a two or three-month layoff. This means that you will have to go to the expense of calling a service man to make the necessary repairs and adjustments. And with the shortage of competent service men, it may also mean that you'll have to wait a few days before your refrigerator can be put back in running order.

All in all, weighing the amount of electricity conserved against possible inconvenience, increased food waste and service trouble, it's generally a good

idea to keep your refrigerator on the job right through the winter.

And now for the lady who wants some tips on using and caring for glass cooking utensils.

The home economists say that some of the glass cooking ware now on sale is simply "heat-proof" and intended only for use in the oven. Other kinds are "flame proof", and you can use them right on top of the stove, directly over a burner.... double boilers, frying pans, and, of course, glass coffee makers and teapots. Read the label on any of these you buy and make sure it is tempered to stand the heat of a direct flame. Never put a glass saucepan on the top of a stove empty. Always put a little liquid or fat or moist food in it. This precaution is equally important with ovenware.

The main precaution in handling glass cooking ware is to avoid sudden changes of temperature. If the ingredients for the dish you are making come right out of the refrigerator, put them into a cold glass baking dish or saucepan. If you are making something with a hot sauce---say Italian spaghetti,---warm the glass casserole or bake dish before you put the hot ingredients into it,— or put a metal spoon or fork in the dish to conduct the heat. Don't set a hot glass utensil on a cold porcelain or marble slab unless you protect it by several thicknesses of cloth. And don't set a dish of hot food in a glass cooking utensil where a cold draft will blow on it.

As a rule, use lower temperatures for success in cooking in glass than for other cooking ware. For example, a cottage pudding baked in glass needs more time but lower heat than the usual recipe specifies. On the other hand, you can use a little higher temperature when baking pie in a thick glass pie plate, than you would use with metal. The higher temperature will set the pie crust better.

To clean cooking utensils, just use soap and water, or, for stubborn spots, porcelain cleaning powder or fine steel wool, if you can get it.

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